Kamal Kishore, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General (SRSG) for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Head of the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)

Chair of UN-Water, Mr. Alvaro Lario,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for the opportunity to address this important gathering.

Water, too much or too little, is the one element that connects 90 per cent of disasters around the world. And with climate change, it is becoming increasingly difficult for communities to manage the disaster risks associated with water.

Recent events, such as the floods in Kenya that killed over 250 people and caused damage estimated at US$35 million, have reminded us of the vital importance of preventing or reducing water-related risks before they lead to disasters.

Thanks to the coinciding midterm reviews of the Sendai Framework and the Water Action Decade last year, there is an enhanced appreciation by UN Member States and stakeholders of the need to take action on water-related disaster risks.

The UN system-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation will help accelerate action and deliver on our promises.

This includes breaking silos to address common water-related risks through a multi-hazard and multi-sectoral risk governance approach. For example, integrating disaster risk reduction into national water strategies will help countries better manage and prepare for drought periods and extreme flood events.
To that end, and in line with the UN system-wide Strategy, UNDRR is working closely with UN-Water members to deliver on the commitments we made as part of the Water Action Agenda to help countries build their resilience. The three commitments are:

1. To help countries better understand the water-related losses and damages they face, which will inform risk reduction and adaptation measures, as well as water resource management plans.

2. To leverage the Principles for Resilient Infrastructure to help countries identify and address vulnerabilities in their infrastructure systems. This will ensure that infrastructure investments take the changing climate into consideration, thus embedding resilience into water infrastructure decisions and investments.

3. To enhance early warning and early action from water-related hazards through the implementation of the UN Secretary-General’s Early Warnings for All initiative.

UNDRR is committed to the One-UN approach and to contributing to the transformation of the UN system-wide Strategy for Water and Sanitation into concrete actions at all levels.

Only through partnerships will we succeed in delivering on this important agenda and build lasting resilience for all.

Thank you.